

STORY 94.

AN EXHIBITION OF GREAT MORAL COURAGE.

It is said that Akbar did not conform to the formal ceremonies of worship enjoined by Islam. His intimate friends too followed in his footsteps and if any person of strong convictions happened to visit Akbar when he was in the midst of such of his associates as Abul Fazal and Faizi it required an exceptionally high moral courage, to say the prayers if the time for prayers arrived. Shahbaz Khan of Lahore was a great noble of the court of Akbar. He was a great general and a person of great distinction. With all these qualifications he was a true Muslim. He did not share in the free thinking of Akbar and his intimate friends but preserved his independence of belief and practice.

It is said that one afternoon when the time for prayers came Akbar was walking along the banks of the tank of Fatehpour Sikri hand in hand with Shahbaz Khan. Some of the nobles were standing at a distance and saying to each other. "If this man says his prayers in time today, we shall believe that he is a true Muslim, otherwise he shall prove himself to be a time server and hypocrite." When Shahbaz Khan looked at the position of the sun and saw that it was time for prayers he told the king that he wanted to say his prayers. The king told him to

put them off and combine it with the evening prayers.

From the tone of the king's remark Shahbaz Khan concluded that he was bent on preventing from saying him prayers. He suddenly made up his mind, and removing his hand from the king's grasp turned his face towards the west and was engaged in his devotion.

Akbar felt ashamed but the nobles admired the moral courage and sense of duty displayed by Shahbaz Khan.